

Letter to the Community

May 5, 2020

Welcome to the month of May. I want to take this opportunity to thank the backbone of our medical workforce, our amazing NURSES! A huge shout out - Happy Nurses day tomorrow, May 6th!!

This week, Governor Inslee announced that we are entering Phase 1 of Washington State's plan at modifying physical distancing measures. While folks in the high-risk categories are still encouraged to stay home and stay healthy, a few outdoor recreation activities are allowed as long as people maintain their physical distancing of at least 6 feet, and there are facilities for handwashing or hand sanitation. A few more businesses are also allowed to operate under the same [guidelines](#).

In our new 'normal', the **new community standard** is that people will:

- Maintain at least 6 feet distance from others (except household members).
- Wear a face covering, if not medically contraindicated, when you are out in public or cannot avoid being less than 6 feet away from someone.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes.
- Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer as part of your routine.
- Stay home when you are ill and stay away from anyone else who is ill.

Many businesses that provide essential services, like grocery stores, airlines, and warehouse stores are now asking everyone to wear a face covering when in their facility. This is an attempt to protect their workers and others from COVID-19. Wearing a face covering helps to protect others in case you sneeze or cough, or are just starting to come down with symptoms.

It will take a few weeks of sustained decrease in cases, an increase in people getting tested for COVID-19, and continued case and contact tracing by the statewide public health system to help move Washington to phase 2 of the plan. We will be carefully monitoring our cases, health care facility capacity, and ability to respond.

Over the next three weeks, we plan to increase access to testing. Right now, we recommend viral testing for anyone with symptoms. Symptoms are a new onset of cough or shortness of breath plus at least 2 other symptoms (fever, chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, or new loss of sense of taste or smell). Contact your health care provider to see if you can come in for a test. We are not yet recommending testing for persons without symptoms.

If you are symptomatic and do not have access to a health care provider, contact the Providence Hawks Prairie testing site, which is open Monday through Friday from 9:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. at (855) 776-4362. Please call before you go!

Anyone being tested due to symptoms of COVID-19 will be asked to remain isolated from others until they receive their test results back. If you test positive, you will receive a call from our Health Department providing you guidance and support for the period of isolation. If you test positive, everyone in your household will also be asked to quarantine in place.

Please make it a practice to stay home when you are sick. This will help decrease spread of illness. If you are houseless, there is an isolation facility available for temporary housing while you await results or for the period of isolation you need.

Please continue to stay safe as we start easing into decreasing restrictions. Thank you for your patience!

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